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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS.

SENTENCES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

SELECTED BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

III.

Self-limiting diseases should be left to run their course. In some temperaments, action and character fall under this head. There are defects we cannot cure, errors we cannot atone for.

To know a little, and to know that well, gives a person a certain importance in these diffusively informed times, when each one crams his cheek like a squirrel with a *tout ensemble* of nutshells.

External events impress us less as youth retreats; but the perception of youth is not obliterated by age. To *others*, we look old; to *ourselves*, there is no perceptible change, as age is not of the mind, but the body.

Memory is that amber of thought which preserves the flies once buzzing so loudly against the ceiling of our kitchen. Here is a museum with magic mirrors, whose reflection faithfully repeats long-past illusions. On this hearth lie the ashes of spent affections, the precipitate of possibilities, dusty bas-reliefs of a shadowy existence, which this ever-shifting, transparent varnish recalls to a moment's life.

Certainly J. B. is a woman almost trying to understand what is said to her; and what lack of art or nature spills all that Xeres wine from her cellars? It came near to be a thought in her, and fades to a feeling, lively, rapid, and flexible, but without the due assignable limit. All she asked of this life was the permission to die. When she spoke of this, a flood of sunbeams transfigured her pale and weary face, as if she were already smiling at a banquet in the skies.

The total of most men's lives is an unwieldy mass, barely informed by a flash of expression. They have great faith in dulness to endure it at the rate they do.

Cold, dry, and self-satisfied persons are of value to the wayward and susceptible, as mixtures make the best mill-stones.

New books are like new cider: they soon grow hard, and next turn to vinegar.

All things and men flow to the fortunate man. Where he was born or what he has is a little matter; favors drop down on him like rain from the sky. The public caress, his private circle worships him. Without his seeking, the best persons of every class surrender themselves at discretion to his purposes. He is the wax which receives all impressions, and is injured by none.

Some prudish, half-developed women are so faithful to falsehood they cannot even believe that another can offer himself to be their friend; and consider it personal disgrace if they are incorrectly supposed to possess the thinnest mockery of a female heart.

Hold by thyself, since the laws of the moral constitution are believed by some to owe thee a fit return for self-reliance. Be clad in shreds or patch, nurtured on a spare fast, alone and unknown, thy own servant and thy own master. So shalt thou not give way to the vacant air, nor resign thy surroundings to sun or star. Vines cut low produce a grape.

The coffin-maker is a spare, smiling, gray-haired man, always spoiling for a corpse. Over his work-bench hangs a bit of pine board, on which is written in pencil the length, breadth, and height of coffins for persons of different ages.

The scholar should sit in a serenity as calm and inaccessible as those beautiful and noble monuments some god has deposited out there, and which men name Nature!

Can ye make diamonds of granite and pomegranates of corn? In human character there is, too, a tough specification. Men develop, they never change.

Homer is gone; and where is Jove, and where
The rival cities seven? His song outlives
Time, tower, and god—all that then was, save Heaven.—*Festus*.

Think not so fondly as thy foolish race,
Imagining a Heaven from things without;
The picture on the passing wave call Heaven;
The wavelet, life; the sands beneath it, death;
Daily more seen till, lo! the bed is bare—
This fancy fools the world.

There are points from which we can command our life,
When the soul sweeps the future like a glass;
And coming things, full-freighted with our fate,
Jut out, dark, on the offing of the mind.

There are no traces to be found of either Rime or Metre in our language till some years after the Conquest. And from those old Roman Poets they took their first lessons in Riming, when Rime was tough and stringy like the cocoanut rind.—*Tyrwhitt*.

He is born for a limited sphere who thinks of the people of his own time. Others will come after him who can judge without offence and without favor.—*Seneca*.

Shaking between them the skin suspended between three stakes, and filled with milk to be thus churned to butter.—*Layard* [*"Nineveh"*].

I cannot but think Schiller's turn for philosophy has injured his poetry. It led him to prefer ideas to nature.—*Goethe*.

"Do not our lives consist of the four elements?"—"Faith! so they say; but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking."—*Shakespeare*.

Not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life
Is the prime wisdom.—*Milton*.

The instrumental cause is constantly adjoined to the principal cause. An active, in order to be efficient, must always have a passive conjoined with it.—*Swedenborg*.

Forms ascend from the lowest to the highest, in order and by degrees, as do also the essences and substances of all things.—*Ibid*.

In youth, when we either possess nothing, or know not how to value the tranquil possession of anything, we are democrats; but when we, in a long life, have come to possess something of our own, we wish not only ourselves to be secure of it, but that our children and grandchildren should be secure of inheriting it.—*Goethe*.

A score of airy miles will smooth
Rough Monadnoc to a gem.—*Emerson*.

As sings the pine-tree in the wind,
So sings in the wind a sprig of the pine.

Dear friend, where thy shadow falls,
Beauty sits and music calls;
Where thy form and favor come,
All good creatures have their home.

When thou dost shine, darkness looks white and fair,
Forms turn to music, clouds to smiles and air.—*Vaughan*.

The light of the understanding is not a dry or pure light, but drenched in the will and affections, and the intellect forms the sciences accordingly,

for what men desire to be true they are most inclined to believe. The understanding, therefore, rejects things difficult, as being impatient of inquiry, things just and solid, because they limit hope, and the deeper mysteries of nature, through superstition; it rejects the light of experience, through pride and haughtiness, as disdaining the mind should be meanly or waveringly employed, it excludes paradoxes for fear of the vulgar. And thus the affections tinge and infect the understanding numberless ways, and sometimes imperceptibly.—*Bacon*.

In all their laws and strictest tie of their order, there was but this one rule to be observed: Do as thou wilt.—*Rabelais*.

For six weeks their history is of the kind called barren; which, indeed, as Philosophy knows, is often the fruitfulest of all.—*Carlyle*.

Men's words are a poor exponent of their thoughts; nay, their thought itself is a poor exponent of the inward, unnamed Mystery wherefrom both thought and action have their birth.—*Ibid*.

The forced rolling of sand down a bank under the pressure of water produces a species of foliaceous development, like buds and leaves, a kind of sand-plant, or like a system of blood-vessels or intestines. The pressure of the wheels of a railroad train over mud and water upon the rails produces a like imitation, as well as dripping water partly frozen, frost on windows, and stalactites, which are all semblances of vegetable shapes.

And whereas Mahomet, that his writings might continue, has forbidden them to be read, Moses, that his might last, has commanded everybody to read them. Moses was a very able man; this is indisputable.—*Pascal*.

Between us and Heaven or Hell, or Annihilation, there is nothing interposed but *life*, the most brittle thing in all the world.—*Ibid*.

Every work of art must show on the face of it that it is such; and this can be done only through what we call sensible beauty, or agreeableness. Plastic art relates especially to the human form.—*Goethe*.

Unless we are accustomed to them from early youth, splendid chambers and elegant furniture had best be left to such as neither have nor can have thoughts.—*Ibid*.

Every conception, every mental affection, is followed by changes in the chemical nature of the secreted fluids; every thought, every sensation, is accompanied by a change in the composition of the substance of the brain.—*Liebig*.

Whoever considers the final cause of the world will discern a multitude of uses that enter as parts into that result. They all admit of being

thrown into one of the following classes : commodity, beauty, language, and discipline.—*Emerson*.

Truth and goodness and beauty are but different faces of the same all. Beauty in nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty.—*Ibid*.

Nature is that which is in perpetual growth and progress, and which subsists in continual change of form and internal development.—*Carus*.

All things unto our flesh are kind
In their descent and being ; to our mind,
In their ascent and cause.—*George Herbert*.

I ever desired to discern physical phenomena in their widest mutual connection, and to comprehend nature as a whole, animated and moved by inward forces.—*Humboldt*.

For right as she can paint a lily whit,
And red a rose, right with swiche pcuture
She painted hath this noble creature
Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Whereas by right swiche colours shoulde be ;
And Phebus died hath hire tresses grete,
Like to the stremes of his burned hete.—*Chaucer*.

Flakes of snow form stars upon ice. This is the expansion of radii from a centre. Drops of water are perfect globes. Undoubtedly these are radiated. By crystallization they become flakes, and by falling are flattened into superficial spheres, whereof the true circumferences have been by motion driven into centres. Thus raindrops contain the principles of the star.

Trees are extended circles, or spirals. The diminution of branches above, where other branches are sent off, is a division like the opening of the seed-leaves, and the expansion into twigs and branches resembles nervous and muscular expansions, or that of blood-vessels.

Whatever is displayed in the outermost, flows from a nature which resides in the innermost.—*Swedenborg*.

The least in every series comprehends an idea of its universe.—*Ibid*.

Can lines finite one way be infinite another ? And yet, such is deathlessness.—*Festus*.

And earth, like man her son, is half divine.

Can this be the same heart which, when it did sleep, slept from dizziness, and pure rapidity of passion, like the centre circlet of the whirlpool's wheel ?

Friendship hath passed me like a ship at sea.

How strangely fair
Yon round still star! which looks half suffering from,
And half rejoicing in, its own strong fire;
Making itself a loneliness of light.

The lakelet now, no longer vexed with gusts,
Replaces on her breast the pictured moon,
Pearled round with stars.

The cloud-like laurel clumps sleep, soft and fast,
Pillowed by their own shadows, . . . the sharp firs
Fringe, like an eyelash, on the faint blue west,
The white owl wheeling from the grey old church.

Dreams are the heart's bright shadow on life's flood.

The world shall rest, and moss itself with peace.

In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature. The simple perception of natural forms is a delight.—*Emerson*.

The separation of subject from object, the faith that each creature exists for its own sake, and that cork-trees do not grow merely that we may have stopples for our bottles, this, I share with Kant.—*Goethe*.

The Mohammedans give their young people for a religious basis this doctrine, that nothing can happen to man except what was long since decreed by an overruling providence; in philosophy, that nothing exists which does not suppose its contrary.—*Ibid*.

The stomach has two curvatures or arches, and on its concave surface respects poles, axes, and foci; by these through their radii, which are so many circular forms, circumferences; and by all points of these again, their poles, axes, and foci; and so on, in an *everlasting gyre*. A similar form occurs in the intestines, or in the *ultimates* of the body; likewise, in the brains, or in the *principles* of the body; and also throughout in the *intermedials*. This form must be called the perpetual, circular, or the spiral form—the essential mode of motion, or fluxion of organic substance.—*Swedenborg*.

Learn of the little nautilus to sail.—*Pope*.
